



## System puts smokers on notice with ban starting next year

by Emily Killian, Shelby Star Staff Writer

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SHELBY — Football fans' nights of snuggling under a blanket and lighting up a cigarette are now numbered.

Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, the use of all tobacco products will be prohibited on Cleveland County school grounds.

The smoke-free policy, as adopted by the school board Monday night, means that everyone on school property — teachers, students, parents and even construction workers — is prohibited from using tobacco products. People in vehicles on campuses will be included in the prohibition.

The policy, adopted unanimously, did not pass without discussion.

Board member Mary Evans expressed concern over the enforcement of the policy and cited an instance where she changed seats at a recent football game because of someone smoking.

“I wasn't about to walk up to a big guy and say, ‘Put that out,’” she said, as several board members nodded assent.

Board member Shearra Miller expressed concern over enforcement as well.

“I don't want the principals to think that they're going to have to walk around and be the cigarette patrol,” she said.

Schools employ security and those people would be in charge of enforcing the policy, board chairman Dr. George Litton said.

Board members chose to make the policy effective next school year so people can begin adjusting to the change in advance.

Hickory City Schools and Gaston County Schools have already adopted a smoke-free policy, board members said.

The board also opened discussions on several other policies, among them:

### **Use of school facilities, including stadiums, auditoriums and cafeterias**

As a general rule, non-profits will be allowed to use school facilities, although they will have to pay for staff costs.

Amid discussion, several board members expressed concern over how rigid the policy should be.

“The relationship there is that we’ll help each other,” deputy superintendent Dr. Larry Allen said. “It’s a good-neighbor policy.”

Board member Richard Hooker advocated for Allen to be able to use discretion with the policy, and several other board members nodded their assent.

The board will take up the policy again at the next meeting.

### **Religion in the schools**

Mrs. Miller voiced concern over a part of the draft policy that says, “Student groups sponsored by the school system shall not perform as part of a religious worship service.”

She asked if school chorus groups would be banned from performing at church events. Student groups would potentially need to drop their name if they were to perform in a religious worship service if the policy is adopted as it stands.

During the public comments period, Kings Mountain resident Michael Smith announced that some people living in the Gaston County portion of Kings Mountain have formed a group called Gatekeepers and handed out compact disks of photographs of children affected by the \$1,400 tuition charged to out-of-county residents. “We’d like for you to see the faces of the people who are affected by your decision,” he said as he handed disks to board members.

The board will meet next on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. for a work session. That meeting will likely be in the C-stop building.